DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 296 443 EA 020 070

AUTHOR Anderson, Mark E.
TITLE The Management Team. Patterns for Success.
INSTITUTION Oregon School Study Council, Eugene.
PUB DATE Feb 88
NOTE 31p.
AVAILABLE FROM Publications, Oregon School Study Council, University of Oregon, 1787 Agate Street, Eugene, OR 97403 ($5.00 prepaid; $2.50 shipping and handling on billed orders).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT OSSC Bulletin; v31 n6 Feb 1988

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Organization; *Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; *Management Teams; *Participative Decision Making; *Power Structure; *Trust (Psychology)
IDENTIFIERS *Oregon

ABSTRACT

Team management became popular during the late 1960s and early 1970s as educators adopted the concept to help solve the increasingly complex problems facing schools. The mere existence of a management team of central office and building administrators does not mean that team management is being practiced. Chapter 1 enumerates the benefits of team management (compared to a more individualized or top-down approach), such as improved decision-making, higher staff morale, and greater support for decisions. Next, four elements (team organization, shared power and trust, participative decision-making, and the board-administrator agreement) essential for effective team management are discussed. Chapter 2 documents the experiences of three Oregon school districts--Centennial, Bethel, and Creswell--that illustrate several characteristics of sucessful management teams: (1) organizational structures that vary according to size; (2) strong superintendent support and leadership; and (3) strong support and advocacy by administrators. To help administrators assess the status of their management teams, chapter 3 reviews successful elements, including (1) the strong commitment of the superintendent, school board, and administrators to the team approach; (2) utilization of small work groups; (3) involvement of many district employees; (4) a consensus or centrist decision-making mode; and (5) a team built on trust. Included are 14 references and a list of the nine school administrators and one university dean interviewed for the report. (MGH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED296443

THE MANAGEMENT TEAM
Patterns for Success

Mark E. Anderson

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P. Piele

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 020 070

Oregon School Study Council
February 1988 • Volume 31, Number 6

OSSC BULLETIN

THE MANAGEMENT TEAM
Patterns for Success

Mark E. Anderson

Oregon School Study Council
February 1988 • Volume 31, Number 6

ISSN 0095-6694
Individual Copy $5.00
Quantity Discounts:
10-24 copies - 15%
25-49 copies - 20%
50+ copies - 25%

OSSC STAFF

Philip K. Piele, Executive Secretary
Stuart C. Smith, Editor
Linda Lumsden, Associate Editor, Computer Layout
Erik Nelson, Publications Sales Manager

OSSC GOVERNING BOARD

Jean Fagnan, School Board Member, Reedsport SD 105
Charles Wiltse, Superintendent, Baker SD 5
Kenneth Lindbloom, School Board Member, Medford 549C
Robert Williams, Superintendent, Greater Albany Public SD 8J
Lee Christiansen, Superintendent, Washington ESD
Philip K. Piele, Executive Secretary, Oregon School Study Council
Paul Goldman, Associate Professor, Division of Educational Policy and Management, University of Oregon
Milt Baum, Associate Superintendent of School Management Service Division, State Department of Education
Betty Knight, School Board Member, Oregon School Boards Association

OREGON SCHOOL STUDY COUNCIL
1787 Agate Street
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon 97403
(503) 686-5045

The University of Oregon is an affirmative action, equal opportunity employer.

Preface

Team management is certainly not a new concept to most school administrators. Today many districts boast of having a management team whose membership includes central office and building administrators. Despite its wide acceptance, many administrators who say their district has a management team in reality may not practice team management.

This Bulletin begins with a description of the essential elements that make team management work. Next, several Oregon districts are featured that have successfully implemented the team management concept. Finally, the author outlines several characteristics of successful management teams that may be useful to administrators and school boards in assessing the status of team management in their districts. The examples provided by the successful management teams in Oregon districts and the evidence gleaned from the research literature together make a compelling case for the viability of the team management concept.

This Bulletin was written by Mark Anderson, an OSSC graduate research assistant. Anderson has been a teacher and principal in Washington State and is currently a doctoral student in the Division of Educational Policy and Management at the University of Oregon.

Philip K. Piele
Executive Secretary

Contents

	Preface	iii
	Introduction	1
1.	**Essential Elements of Team Management**	3
	Benefits of the Team Approach	3
	Organizing the Team	5
	Power and Trust	6
	Decision-Making	7
	The Board-Administrator Agreement	9
2.	**Profiles of Successful Management Teams**	11
	Centennial School District	11
	Bethel and Creswell School Districts	16
3.	**Conclusion and Recommendations**	21
	References	25
	Interviews	27

Introduction

Team management became a popular managerial concept in educational organizations in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many educators promoted team management as an effective and necessary approach to school governance. They believed it could assist school decision-makers in solving the increasingly complex and sophisticated problems facing schools. Today, nearly every school district boasts of having a management team whose members are drawn from the administrative staff.

Although team management has become widely accepted among educators, it has not always been successful. Some school districts rushed to implement team management without fully understanding the approach and without the commitment, trust, and training to make it succeessful. In those districts, team management has failed.

Other districts, however, have successfully used team management to improve the quality of decisions, increase administrators' support for and implementation of decisions, improve relationships among administrators, and increase administrators' job satisfaction. The elements that make team management work and the success of management teams in several Oregon school districts—notably Centennial, Creswell, and Bethel—are the subject of this OSSC Bulletin.

These three districts illustrate several characteristics of successful management teams:

1. The organizational structure of effective management teams varies depending upon the size of the district. Creswell, Bethel, and Centennial represent small, medium, and medium-large school districts, respectively, and thus provide examples of different ways to organize a management team to fit district size.

   In addition, Bethel Superintendent Kent Hunsaker provides insight into the kinds of organizational changes a superintendent must make to adjust the team management concept to fit district size. Having recently moved from the superintendency of the smaller Creswell district to the larger Bethel school system, Hunsaker has had the opportunity to reflect upon the effects of district size on the organization of management teams.

2. The success of team management is largely dependent on the superintendent's support and leadership. George Benson, Centennial's superintendent, and Kent Hunsaker, Bethel's superintendent, both advocate and practice team management in their districts.
3. In addition to the superintendent, other administrators must believe in team management and advocate the team approach to leadership. All of the administrators interviewed for this Bulletin believe the team management approach has been effective in their districts, and they offer many practical suggestions for making team management successful.

The success of team management at Centennial, Bethel, and Creswell and the evidence contained in the research literature together make a compelling case for the viability of the team management approach. In chapter 1, essential elements that determine the effectiveness of team management are discussed. Chapter 2 is devoted to a description of management teams in operation in Centennial, Bethel, and Creswell. In the conclusion, to help readers assess the status of team management in their own school districts, several characteristics of effective management teams are highlighted.

I am indebted to George Benson, Kent Hunsaker, and other administrators in Centennial, Bethel, and Creswell schools for sharing their time and insights on team management. Without their openness and candor, I would not have gained many of the practical ideas that are shared in this Bulletin.

Chapter 1

Essential Elements of Team Management

There is no single model for team management that school districts can adopt without modification. As a publication of the American Association of School Administrators notes, "Each school district is unique, and if the team plan does not take into consideration the factors that make it unique, it probably will not succeed." Each district, therefore, must develop a team management model that fits its particular needs and characteristics.

Although no one model of team management can fit all school systems, Harold McNally provides a commonly accepted definition of a management team:

> A group formally constituted by the board of education and superintendent, comprising both central office personnel and middle echelon administrative-supervisory personnel, with expressly stated responsibility and authority for participation in school system decision making.

In addition to agreeing on a definition of team management, a school district must examine and address several elements related to this approach for its management team to succeed. Four of these elements—"Organizing the Team," "Power and Trust," "Decision-making," and "The Board-Administrator Agreement"—are discussed in this chapter. While these are not the only elements that affect team management, they can have a significant impact on the success or failure of this approach to decision-making.

Benefits of the Team Approach

Before examining these four elements, the question may arise, Why bother with team management? The answer is that when team management is working effectively, it can contribute to better quality decisions, higher staff morale, and greater administrative support for decisions that are made.

Better Quality Decisions

Decisions made by a mangement team are likely to be better than those made by an individual acting alone. According to Lloyd Duvall and Kenneth Erickson:

> Groups can generate more alternative courses of action than can individuals. With a wider range of alternatives under consideration the likelihood is increased that a final decision will reflect the actual needs of the organization.

It stands to reason that when a greater number of alternatives are considered, better decisions will usually result.

Higher Staff Morale

Administrators' job satisfaction and morale can be increased when they are initmately involved in the decision-making process. With team management, such administrative participation and involvement in decision-making is fostered. After an extensive review of the literature on the effects of participation, Blumberg concluded:

> There is hardly a study in the entire literature which fails to demonstrate that satisfaction in work is enhanced or that other generally acknowledged beneficial consequences accrue from a genuine increase in workers' decision-making powers.

Greater Support for Decisions

Administrators are more likely to support and implement decisions when they have had some input regarding decisions that affect their work. In effective team management systems, more administrators are involved in the decision-making process. Such involvement may increase administrators' sense of ownership of and commitment to the implementation of decisions that are made. As a joint publication of the American Association of School Administrators and the National School Boards Association indicates:

> When the people in the field are involved in making the decision, they are far more likely to implement it than if it came down as a pronouncement from on high. They also will be more loyal to the superintendent and the system as a whole.

Although there may be other potential benefits of adopting this approach, the team management concept basically encourages superintendents to voluntarily share decision-making power with middle-echelon administrative or supervisory personnel so that decisions are based on the best possible information. In addition, administrators who are part of a management team that has significant influence on district decision-making develop a sense of belonging, which in turn can result in greater administrative productivity.

Since team management has many potential benefits, it is important that administrators understand some of the essential elements that must be carefully addressed to ensure that team management will work effectively. Next, we

will look at four of these elements.

Organizing the Team

Who should be on the management team? How should the team be structured or organized? Since management teams can be organized in a variety of ways, the answer to those questions will depend in part on district size, the number of administrators in the district, and the needs and desires of the district. Organizing the team so it fits the unique characteristics of the district is critical, as John Lindelow notes:

> No one model or set of models can adequately describe the possibilities for team organization, and thus districts must formulate their own team models according to their own local circumstances.

Composition

Most proponents of team management believe the team should include the superintendent, central office administrators, principals, and assistant principals. Although all administrators in a district may be considered members of management, team management does not mean that all administrators must meet together regularly in one large group to make decisions.

The effectiveness of team management depends in part on organizing the team into groups that are small enough to allow effective interaction among the members. Recommendations vary, but fifteen is considered by many to be the maximum number of administrators that should be on a management team, and five to ten members is viewed as ideal. According to Richard Schmuck,

> During the mid-70s to early 80s many districts labeled themselves as a "management team" but were too large to effectively function as a team. A team has to be small enough for team members to interact regularly and influence each other.

If the district is small, dividing the team into subgroups may be unnecessary. In larger districts, however, the management team should be divided into several interlocking teams. The entire management team may meet occasionally in larger districts for informational and ritualistic purposes or to finalize decisions; however, the actual decision-making and the working out of details is usually accomplished in smaller subgroups. In chapter 2, we will see how three Oregon districts have managed to keep their teams fairly small, regardless of district size.

Models of Teams

Kenneth Erickson and Walter Gmelch have identified three management team models that provide ways to hold down the number of administrators on a team and that allow for effective team functioning. The "conventional" model includes teams on three levels: the "policy team," which includes the

superintendent and school board members; the "central management team" made up of the superintendent, representatives of the central office and staff, and all principals; and a third level of teams composed of personnel who report to special area administrators such as the business manager, the curriculum director, or the school principal.

A second model is the "cross-bred team." It is actually two teams: the policy team, composed of the superintendent and school board, and a management team that assumes responsibility for planning, developing concepts, evaluating programs, and making recommendations to the policy team. The management team consists of the superintendent and representatives of various groups in the district such as teachers, principals, classified personnel, community support groups, and finance teams. In this model, management team members represent major subgroups of the school district. We will see a modification of this model when we look at Centennial's team in chapter 2.

A third team model is entitled the "cocoon" team. This model differs slightly from the "cross-bred" model in that the superintendent establishes small ad hoc teams of qualified individuals who study specific problems and offer recommendations to the management team. Duvall and Erickson note that "the single-purpose cocoons (or ad hoc teams) are temporarily attached as servant groups to the management team for a specific purpose and are disbanded once their assignment is completed."

Whatever team management model or structure a district develops, to be successful the team must be organized in such a way that administrators are encouraged to listen and are listened to. Thus, organizing the team into work groups that interact frequently is an important and essential element of team management.

Power and Trust

Formally, the power structure in school districts changes very little with team management. According to John Lindelow and Scott Bentley,

> The school board remains the primary policy-making and governing body of the district. The superintendent remains the one person responsible to the board for the district's proper functioning and retains authority for making the final decisions.

The shift in power that does occur is more informal and, as Lindelow and Bentley note, "depends on the willingness of the superintendent and central office administrators to share their powers." In other words, power is not taken away from the superintendent; rather, he or she must voluntarily choose to share decision-making power with principals and other middle-echelon administrators.

The effectiveness of team management depends not only on the superintendent sharing decision-making power, but also on team members

trusting each other. The superintendent must trust that team members are capable of significantly contributing to district decision-making, and team members must trust the superintendent to implement team decisions. Building such trust, which is vital to the success of team management, takes time. "A functioning management team is not developed over night," say Duvall and Erickson. "It takes time to develop trust and openness between team members."

The decision-making process is a third element that districts must effectively address for team management to be successful. Although proponents of team management encourage sharing power, the team decision-making process may not be appropriate for all district decisions. As we shall see, team members' involvement in decision-making may vary depending upon the nature of the situation. The trust among team members can be damaged and the management team's effectiveness diminished if the team leader does not make it clear at the outset what degree of participation is being sought.

Decision-Making

At the core of the team management concept is the decision-making process. The primary purpose of team management is to provide school-level administrators with more involvement in district decision-making and policy development. Involving administrators in the decision-making process, however, is not as simple as it may sound. Participatory decision-making is more time-consuming than an autocratic approach in which everyone is told what to do. With a participatory or team decision-making approach, administrators must be willing to devote more time to making decisions.

Some administrators may be unwilling to spend such time and may resist increased involvement in decision-making. Superintendents who advocate involving administrators in the decision-making process must carefully analyze team members' attitudes toward involvement and not demand too much participation from those members who are less interested.

In addition, the participatory process is not equally applicable to all decisions. Often administrators are confronted by problems that require an immediate response. In such cases, participatory decision-making does not or can not work effectively. John Lindelow suggests that middle-echelon administrators

> should not necessarily be involved in every decision made by the district. Some problems of a technical or legal nature should be delegated to the person or persons with the greatest expertise. Other routine decisions should not be brought before the team unless they could significantly alter the district's operations.

Superintendents must exercise judgment in determining when to involve administrators in decision-making and when not to involve them. As George Benson, superintendent of the Centennial district, indicates, experience may be

the most effective way for the superintendent to acquire such judgment.

Once a superintendent decides to involve subordinates in decision-making, there are several ways to reach a decision. Duvall and Erickson consider two decision-making modes to be the most effective methods for management teams to adopt or use. The first, the "Consensus Mode," involves wrestling with an issue until every team member can accept a solution to the problem. Consensus does not necessarily mean that all team members must agree that the proposed solution is the best, but that all team members be willing to live with and support the recommended solution.

In the "Centrist" decision-making mode, the team simply provides reactions and suggestions to one decision-maker. Duvall and Erickson suggest that

> the purpose of the team is to suggest alternatives, to interact with the decision maker, to look for unanticipated or unintended consequences of any proposed action. Consensus is not reached, nor is it expected.

Evidence suggests that team members involved in decision-making are more satisfied with the "Consensus" and "Centrist" approaches than with the democratic method of voting on issues. Such a "Democratic-Mode" sometimes results in the application of political pressures among participants and represents a political rather than a problem-solving perspective on issue resolution.

Whatever decision-making approach is used, leaders must make it clear to team members in advance what decision-making approach they are using. If this is not done, team members may become dissatisfied with the decision-making process. "Whichever decision-making style is chosen," says Carolyn J. Wood,

> subordinates need to understand which approach will be used from the outset. When employees are under the false impression that their input will influence the decision outcome, morale, trust, and willingness to commit further time are jeopardized if their suggestions are not used.

Team members' trust, morale, and willingness to commit more time to the decision-making process can also be jeopardized if the superintendent uses the team to legitimize decisions that he or she has already made. Team members' involvement in decision-making must be genuine, and superintendents must avoid expecting the management team to consistently adopt his or her viewpoint.

In team systems, the superintendent usually retains the right to veto team decisions. Although the vetoing of team decisions may be necessary occasionally, the superintendent must exercise such power sparingly or the team will begin to question whether it really possesses any power.

Finally, the effectiveness of team management can also be eroded if team members do not publicly support decisions that are made through the shared decision-making process. Superintendents should encourage team members to voice disagreement or offer differing viewpoints behind the closed doors of

team meetings. However, once a decision is reached by the team, administrators should refrain from publicly voicing disagreement with or nonsupport of the decision. The need for team unity is expressed in the Oregon Association of School Executives' 1987 resolution on team management, which urges school districts to include language in board policy that specifically addresses the need for "proactive support of superintendent and board decisions by all members of the administrative team following the shared decision-making process."

A final element essential to the development of an effective management team is the board-administrator agreement that is normally a part of board policy and administrative procedures. Such an agreement can demonstrate the school board's commitment to the team management approach.

The Board-Administrator Agreement

A school board policy can be the cornerstone upon which a district's management team concept and structure are built. As an AASA and NSBA document suggests, the board policy

> should address the basic philosophical issues, leaving no doubt of the board's commitment and the staff's obligations . . . . The board policy sets the mood and the ground rules for the operation of the administrative team.

If all management team members are involved in developing the board policy, the process of putting the policy down on paper can be very beneficial. As Richard Schmuck says, if the management team struggles to formally define the policy and put it in writing, the team will probably be a stronger body.

The policy or board-administrator agreement should be tailored to fit the unique characteristics of each district. At a minimum, the policy should address the purpose of the team and the board's commitment to the team concept; the team's rights, responsibilities, and limits of authority; the membership, composition, and organization of the team; the responsibilities of each team member; and the specific tasks or types of matters with which the team may deal.

Although a board-administrator agreement may be useful, the existence of an agreement does not necessarily ensure that management teams will function effectively. As Schmuck notes, having a board policy on paper "does not mean much if it is not followed in practice." Whether or not a formal agreement exists, Lindelow and Bentley note that all team members should "clearly understand the team's objectives, organization, and operating procedures."

As we look next at successful teams in three Oregon districts, the testimony of administrators' indicates that the success of management teams depends more on what is practiced than on what is stated on paper. The administrators in these districts also express that the success of team

management depends in large part on a superintendent who is devoted to the concept and genuinely believes in sharing decision-making power with others. Superintendents in Centennial, Bethel, and Creswell both advocate and practice team management, and their teams incorporate many of the essential elements noted in this chapter. Although theories on team management are useful in providing ideas about how management team systems should be structured and function, the teams at these three Oregon districts provide some practical advice concerning what makes team management work.

Chapter 2

Profiles of Successful Management Teams

This chapter looks at team management from an experiential perspective by documenting the experiences of three Oregon districts with successful management teams. Although the districts vary in size, personnel, composition of student body, and other characteristics, all three districts share many common features that makes team management a success. These include a superintendent who promotes the team management concept and who is a good listener, communicator, and group facilitator; a decision-making process based primarily on the consensus and centrist modes; a division of the management team into working subgroups; and an atmosphere of trust among team members. We first feature Centennial School District in East Portland.

Centennial School District

Centennial School District (1987-88 enrollment: approximately 4,939 students in 8 schools) was formed in 1976 by combining schools from three separate districts (Gresham Union High District, Pleasant Valley, and Lynch Elementary District). George Benson, superintendent, had a unique opportunity to put the management team concept into practice as he has been Centennial's only superintendent since the district's inception. Benson came to Centennial after leaving his position as principal of a high school in California, where he used a team decision-making model with his high school staff. "George had a golden opportunity to implement his philosophy of team management in the newly formed district," says Minnie Richards, Centennial High School principal. Richards believes Benson's commitment to a participatory decision-making process has been vital to building an effective management team in Centennial over the past decade. All Centennial administrators echo Richards' opinion and believe that Benson is the key individual responsible for the success of team management in the district.

Building Trust

Benson agrees that a superintendent's commitment to the team management concept is essential to its success, and he suggests several ways that a superintendent can ensure the team concept is implemented effectively. First, Benson believes a superintendent must "develop rapport with team members, both professionally and personally." It is important, he says, to "build a good one-to-one relationship with each team member so they know that you are trustworthy, open, and not judgmental." Trust is an important ingredient in Centennial's team success, and, as Benson notes, "the building of such trust takes time."

One way Benson brings about a strong one-to-one working relationship and develops openness and trust among team members and himself is through regular monthly meetings that are scheduled individually with each administrator. The meetings are often held at the administrator's work site. During these meetings, Benson reviews an individual's goals, discusses mechanics of building operations, and sees and listens to each administrator's concerns. According to Dorothy Patrick, elementary curriculum director and former elementary principal in Centennial, "Benson also assumes direct responsibility for building administrators' performances, which helps establish a personal working relationship. We now know George as a person and know we are directly responsible to him. This has strengthened our relationships."

Yearly retreats, held at sites outside the district, "have also been a helpful tool to improve working relationships and build trust," says Clark Brody, middle school principal in Centennial. The retreats usually combine inservice for administrators, district business, and social events. "Many times your job might bring you into conflict with others," notes Brody, and "the retreats help you get to know team members socially and see each other in a different light." Benson believes the administrative team's yearly retreats have helped to break down barriers and build trust among team members that is necessary for productive working relationships.

An open agenda principals' meeting, scheduled between the superintendent and principals prior to the regular bimonthly administrative team meeting, is another activity Benson instituted that has contributed to effective team functioning and the high degree of trust that exists between principals and Benson. "At first, we (principals) felt that things were decided at the superintendent's cabinet level and passed on to principals. The open agenda principals' meetings changed that," says Patrick. She says the open agenda meetings allow principals to freely discuss their concerns directly with the superintendent and help ensure that principals' opinions are heard before decisions are made. From the principals' perspective, the open agenda principals' meetings have been vital to ensuring the success of team management in Centennial.

In addition to building rapport and trust among team members, Benson believes the success of team management is also dependent on the

superintendent organizing team members into small enough working groups so they can interact frequently. Centennial's team or teams are organized around a multiple or interlocking team approach that allows a variety of district employees to interact and communicate on a regular basis and influence district decisions.

Interlocking Team

Similar to some of the team models described in chapter 1, Centennial's interlocking team approach includes the following groups:

- a policy team made up of school board members and the superintendent
- a Superintendent's Cabinet that includes all central office administrators
- a Principal's Council that convenes on two levels—first an open agenda meeting with the principals and superintendent and, second, the Cabinet members with the principals

All principals have input into building the agenda. The entire administrative team meets on a more infrequent basis for dinner meetings, workshops, and social occasions.

In addition to involving administrators on teams, other district employees have been organized into teams that have an influence on district decision-making. These teams are as follows:

- a superintendent's advisory council composed of a teacher representative from each building in the district and two principal representatives who meet on a regular basis with the superintendent to discuss and deal with issues and concerns at the building level
- a support staff council made up of classified representatives from each work site who meet with the personnel director to discuss classified employee concerns
- a regular monthly meeting between the superintendent and representatives of the Centennial Education Association

The ad hoc or "cocoon" team model is also used to deal with particular issues that arise. Membership of these ad hoc teams often includes different district employees and sometimes citizens, depending on the issue, who study a problem and make recommendations to the management team and superintendent.

Benefits of Centennial's Team Process

Marv Hempel, personnel director for the Centennial district, summarizes some of the benefits that are derived from communicating regularly with such a wide variety of people and genuinely involving them in the district's decision-making process. As a result of good communication and interaction, "district administrators are exposed many times to more information than anticipated, which gives us more options from which to make decisions," says Hempel. In addition, "people feel they have a stake in decisions that affect them and an

ability to influence decisions."

Minnie Richards adds to Hempel's list of team management benefits, noting that it creates a feeling of ownership. "Not very many people like top-down decisions, and it is better if you feel that you are part of the solution." According to Clark Brody, involving a variety of administrators in district decision-making facilitates the coordination of activities. Moreover, he says, "we all know what direction we are headed in the district. Team management helps middle managers buy into the bigger picture. Consequently, we work well together—it is not we against another."

Benson cites the recent smooth reorganization of schools in the district, which resulted in the closing of one middle school, as an example of an issue that the team wrestled with and, as a result, made a good decision. Such a decision could not have been implemented as smoothly without eliciting employee input and encouraging productive team interactions.

Another example is a recent cooperative effort to lessen the district's financial difficulties. Hempel notes that frequent interaction and communication between the Centennial Education Association and administrators led to a mutual decision that all employees would take a five-day cut in pay. Hempel believes that, without such communication and an open working relationship with the CEA, teachers probably would not have willingly agreed to make such sacrifices.

A Clear Decision-Making Process

Benson warns, however, that the benefits of team management most likely will not be derived unless the superintendent clarifies at the outset the degree of involvement team members will have in the decision-making process. "On many issues, a decision can be reached through the consensus approach," says Benson. When faced with other decisions, "you want the team's input, but they need to understand that I will make the final decision. People need to know up front who will make the decision." Thus, the superintendent's clear communication with team members concerning how a decision will be reached is another way to better ensure the successful implementation of team management.

According to Hempel, Centennial's team reaches most decisions by consensus. At the superintendent's cabinet level, "95 percent of the time you know what the decision is when you walk out of the meeting." Hempel adds that while there are times when Benson takes the team's input and then uses it to make the final decision himself, "he does an excellent job of getting back to the team on the decision and the reason why the decision was made a certain way." In addition, Hempel says Benson consistently follows through on team decisions, and team members see results.

Although many decisions are reached by consensus, principals seem to welcome the fact that Benson will make a decision if the team cannot agree on an issue. "When you cannot get consensus, it is important that the boss makes the decision. It keeps groups from polarizing," says Brody. When consensus

is reached, however, Benson says he rarely vetoes the decision, "but team members know that I have such authority." As Brody notes, "the buck stops on the superintendent's desk."

Good Listening and Communication Skills

A final element important to Centennial's successful decision-making process is that team members have developed good listening, communication, and group process skills. Consultants have provided team members with inservice in these areas at some of the team's retreats. Administrators also indicate Benson's modeling of skills in these three areas has been influential.

Good communication and interaction occurs, in part, because Benson encourages administrators to express different viewpoints on issues. "George wants you to express your own views and doesn't want you to say what you think he wants to hear," says Hempel. As a result of team members feeling free to express divergent perspectives and insights on issues without fearing they will fall into disfavor, the team generates sufficient information on which to base decisions.

The Board-Administrator Agreement

A board policy and administrative regulation outlines the purpose of Centennial's management team, its organization, and its operating procedures. Since the board-administrator agreement was developed in the early stages of the district's formation, many administrators indicate that their understanding of how the team operates depends more on how it functions on a daily basis than on the written board policy, although most principals interviewed were aware that such a policy exists. Benson notes that he works individually with administrators new to the district, aquainting them with how the management team functions in Centennial.

While practicing team management provides administrators with a "hands-on" understanding of how the team operates, Patrick notes another important factor that has contributed to administrators and school board members aquiring a good understanding of the board-administrator agreement on team management. "Benson has involved school board members in team workshops, retreats and dinner meetings, and he has provided them with good information on district needs," says Patrick. These activities have enabled board members to become aquinted with administrators, to understand how the team operates, and to feel like part of the team.

Time for Team Decision-Making

Benson believes some people object to the team approach to decision-making because of the time it takes. "You cannot move things through the decision-making process as fast, and the amount of time it takes to make a decision can be a real frustration to some people." Even though the team process requires administrators to devote more time to decision-making, all administrators feel such a sacrifice is well worth the benefits.

All Centennial administrators interviewed for this Bulletin believe they have an exemplary management team due to a superintendent who is committed to the team concept, a trusting and open working relationship among team members, and a decision-making process that allows for frequent and meaningful communication. Patrick sums up the administrators' feelings on Centennial's management team: "We feel very fortunate to be a part of such an excellent team."

Bethel and Creswell School Districts

Bethel administrators and school board members renewed their commitment to the team management concept at an August 1987 retreat under the direction of new Superintendent Kent Hunsaker. After being appointed Bethel's superintendent in the spring of 1987, Hunsaker asked each administrator to write him a letter expressing his or her insights on the district and suggesting areas needing improvement. Based on information in these letters, Hunsaker recognized that the team management concept in Bethel needed to be updated, redefined, and practiced in such a way that administrators would be allowed to truly function as a management team.

Bethel (with an enrollment of approximately 3,640 in 8 schools) is over three times larger than the Creswell district Hunsaker just left. Because Hunsaker has been the superintendent in both Creswell and Bethel, an analysis of team management in both districts will help us to see some of the ways district size affects the team management concept.

Hunsaker believes his experience in smaller school systems has helped him to see the benefits of keeping things small, regardless of actual district size. His belief in keeping things small is reflected in Bethel's team organization. Hunsaker notes that in Creswell, where there were only seven administrators, there was no need to form subgroups. In Bethel, however, where there are twenty administrators, a multiple team approach is necessary to keep the teams small.

Team Organization and District Size

In contrast to Creswell's one team approach, the organization of Bethel's team resembles that of Centennial, with several smaller teams working on issues germane to their areas and then meeting as a larger body to reach agreement on items that affect the entire district. One team, the superintendent's cabinet, meets once per week and includes all central office administrators, the superintendent, and a principal representative. Principals are organized into another set of teams called subcouncils.

The principal teams—divided into high school, middle school, and elementary school subcouncils—meet separately once a month, rotating their locations among schools in the district. The issues and topics discussed at subcouncil meetings are pertinent to each level, and most

decisions are reached by consensus.

The entire central office team attends each principal subcouncil meeting; as Hunsaker notes, "holding the meetings in the various schools helps teachers and staff see central office administrators in their buildings and gives us the opportunity to interact face-to-face with people in their own setting."

The Board Policy: Only a Starting Place

Bethel's board policy and administrative procedure on team management—revised by the team at its 1987 summer retreat—guides the team's operation. Bethel administrators concur with Centennial team members, however, that what is practiced on a daily basis is what determines whether or not team management succeeds. "We have produced a document," says Garrett, Bethel principal, "but the document won't make team management happen. Actually, what is going on in the trenches will be proof if team management exists."

Shared Responsibilities for Team Meetings

Applying a technique that he used in Creswell, Hunsaker rotates the responsibility for convening principal subcouncil meetings among administrators. The administrator in whose building the meeting is held is responsible for chairing the meeting and distributing minutes afterwards. According to Schmuck and Runkel, effective meetings are characterized, in part, by decentralizing leadership roles. It is recommended that the superintendent allow the chairmanship of the team to rotate so that the superintendent does not dominate the meetings in a self-serving way.

In contrast to Creswell, where the full administrative team met weekly, Hunsaker reports that Bethel's entire team meets once a month. These monthly meetings are planned, organized, and led by a standing six-member committee composed of central office administrators and building principals. School board members are invited. In addition, Hunsaker believes another key to the success of team management is support from the board, and he recommends that superintendents make an effort to occasionally involve board members in activities with all administrators to develop such support.

At the monthly team meeting, administrators discuss various district issues and eventually arrive at most decisions through a consensus approach. The meetings also incorporate guest and staff presentations, administrator inservice, the sharing of accomplishments, and dinner. Hunsaker believes "breaking bread together" can help bring the team closer together and give team members an opportunity to interact with each other in an informal setting.

Hunsaker admits that the amount of time it takes to make decisions can be frustrating with the team approach. He suggests, however, "If you don't put in the time during the making of a decision, you have to put it in on the other end making sure it gets implemented." Hunsaker also believes that the superintendent has to be willing to share decision-making power with others and trust their judgments. "If you think you have to be involved in every

decision, you better not use team management," notes Hunsaker.

Influence of Teachers on District Decisions

In addition to the superintendent's cabinet, principal subcouncils, and entire management team, ad hoc teams are formed to study specific issues and make recommendations to the full team. Hunsaker also plans to form a district advisory council composed of teacher representatives from each building and administrative representatives. The council will provide other district employees with an opportunity to influence decisions and, as Hunsaker says, "to advise the district on ways it should go in curriculum and staff development." In Creswell, Hunsaker involved staff in a program entitled "Onward to Excellence." Dennis Biggerstaff, Creswell middle school principal, reports that the program was an excellent way to involve staff in helping set goals and making decisions that affect them.

The Superintendent's Key Role

Similar to Centennial team members, administrators in both Creswell and Bethel believe that the superintendent plays a vital role in ensuring the success of team management. Jim Winger, an elementary principal, believes being a good listener and knowing how to build trust are tools that help superintendents to bring about effective working relationships among team members and to ensure the successful implementation of team management. "Hunsaker is an excellent listener and leaves you with the feeling that he wants to hear your ideas," says Max Garrett, another Bethel principal.

The superintendent must not only have and use effective listening skills to obtain relevant information for making decisions, but he or she must also do something with the information that is obtained, says Biggerstaff, a Creswell principal. "Kent not only heard from everyone in the group at Creswell, but he did something with the information." Administrators in Bethel also see follow-through and "action" on decisions made. As in Centennial, the superintendent's follow-through on decisions is again seen as essential for effective team functioning.

Trust and Commitment

Like Benson in Centennial, Hunsaker uses monthly meetings as one way of building trust among team members and himself, getting to know administrators on a personal basis, and letting administrators know he genuinely cares about their needs and concerns. According to Biggerstaff, these individual meetings gave administrators a way of keeping the superintendent updated on building concerns.

Hunsaker has continued the meetings with individual administrators in Bethel. Because of the greater number of administrators, he has had to increase the amount of time spent on this important trust-building and information-gathering activity. As Winger notes, Hunsaker's individual

meetings with principals and his regular building visits have already begun to build trust and rapport among Bethel administrators.

Garrett believes Bethel administrators are now more encouraged about team management in the district because Hunsaker has established trust between team members and himself. "At the summer retreat, we got the message that Hunsaker was here to work with us," says Garrett. "He has set a tone that makes you feel like participating and then backs up what is being said with action." Although many writers and practitioners warn that it may take a long time to build trust among team members, Hunsaker's frequent contact with administrators, good human relations and listening skills, personable working style, and implementation of decisions seems to have established such trust in a relatively short time.

According to Winger, Hunsaker's commitment to involving administrators in the decision-making process and to creating a climate of support and trust among team members has "made people feel secure. If problems come up, you feel like you are not isolated, that you can get support, and you can get other's ideas."

In summary, Hunsaker believes the superintendent is the one who "sets the tone," the person who must be a good role model of participatory decision-making for team management to succeed.

Chapter 3

Conclusion and Recommendations

The experiences of the Centennial, Bethel, and Creswell districts with team management have shown it to be a viable alternative to a "top down" approach to school district governance. The team approach used in these districts has resulted in administrators obtaining better information upon which to base decisions. In addition, the effective implementation of team management in these districts has helped create an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect and contributed to high morale among administrators.

On the basis of evidence from both research and practice, we have seen that the following elements characterize a successful management team. Determining whether the elements are present or absent in their district may help administrators and school boards to assess the status of their management team.

A superintendent committed to team management. From the literature on team management and the observations of administrators in districts covered in this Bulletin, one characteristic of a successful management team is a superintendent who is committed to the team management concept. The superintendent is the key individual responsible for team management's success and effectiveness.

In team management systems, the superintendent still continues to be responsible for making the final decisions; however, he or she must be willing to relinquish some authority and voluntarily share decision-making power with other administrators for the team management system to succeed. John Lindelow and Scott Bentley reached the same conclusion in their investigation of successful teams in other states: "Team management is highly dependent on a superintendent who is genuinely interested in sharing decision-making power with middle-echelon administrators."

A school board committed to the team management concept. A second factor that increases the success of a management team is a school board that believes in the team decision-making process. A board-administrator agreement, or formal policy, is one way for the board to

demonstrate its support for team decision-making. Although development of such an agreement may be a good place to start or a way to renew the board's and administrators' commitment to the team concept, the evidence from successful teams clearly shows that what is practiced is more important than what is on paper. Whether or not a formal agreement exists, administrators who are members of successful teams clearly understand the team's objectives, organization, and operating procedures.

School boards may also show their commitment to the team concept by allowing team members more time to make recommendations, understanding that shared decision-making takes more time than centralized decision-making.

A group of administrators committed to the team approach. Successful management teams are also characterized by administrators who believe in the team management concept and support the team decision-making process. Commitment to a shared approach to decision-making means that administrators must be willing to devote an increased amount of time to decision-making.

In addition, all administrators in successful teams publicly support decisions made through the shared decision-making process, whether they fully agree with them or not. School administrators in successful teams no longer blame "those people in the central office," but instead assume some responsibility for the outcome.

Utilization of small work groups. Productive work groups also characterize successful management teams. As we saw in Creswell, a district having only seven administrators, such an arrangement was relatively easy. In larger districts, like Bethel and Centennial, the original team was broken down into several smaller teams to try to maximize its effectiveness.

In larger school systems, where multiple teams are required, there is a tendency for communication to become fragmented. Designating certain team members to serve as communication links between teams may help alleviate this problem. Another option is for the superintendent to serve in such a "link-pin" role. In addition, individual group leaders should keep accurate records of all team discussions and distribute them to the other groups to ensure that all are aware of what is being discussed in other groups.

Involvement of many district employees. A fifth characteristic found in districts with successful teams is teacher and classified representation on district teams. All employees need a means by which they can influence district decisions and policies. Including teachers and classified employees on the ad hoc teams and standing teams or advisory councils, whose membership is rotated among employees, appears to be effective in involving employees in decision-making.

A consensus and centrist mode for making decisions. Reaching decisions through consensus is a sixth characteristic of successful management teams. The centrist mode, where team members provide reactions and suggestions to one decision-maker, is also effective. In a successful team, the leader makes it clear to team members what decision-making approach is being

used and who will make the decision. In addition, the leader encourages team members to express diverse views and opinions on issues during decision-making without fear of falling into disfavor.

A team built on trust. The seventh and most important characteristic of a successful management team is trust. As the districts described in this Bulletin demonstrate, a team can succeed only when its members trust one another. In successful teams, the superintendent trusts his or her coworkers and values their opinions and insights. In turn, team members trust the superintendent and respect his or her judgments.

Although Benson and Hunsaker use different strategies to build and nourish such trust in their districts, each superintendent devotes a great deal of time to building rapport with each member of the team, both professionally and personally. In addition, they plan and encourage numerous activities that allow team members to interact with each other, both professionally and personally. Whatever methods are used, an atmosphere of trust must exist for team management to succeed.

References

American Association of School Administrators and National School Boards Association. *The Administrative Leadership Team.* Arlington, Virginia: AASA and NSBA, 1979. 31 pages. ED 204 843.

Blumberg, P. *Industrial Democracy: The Sociology of Participation.* London, 1968.

Duvall, Lloyd A., and Kenneth A. Erickson. "School Management Teams: What Are They and How Do They Work?" *NAASP Bulletin* 65, 445 (May 1981): 62-67. EJ 243 865.

Erickson, Kenneth A., and Walter H. Gmelch. *School Management Teams: Their Structure, Function, and Operation. ERS Monograph.* Arlington, Virginia: Educational Research Service, Inc., 1977. ED 144 230.

Grindle, Bryce W. "Administrative Team Management: Four Essential Components." *Clearing House* 56, 1 (September 1982): 22-33. EJ 269 728.

Hale, Norman. *The Management Team.* Eugene, Oregon: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. 1978. 40 pages. ED 161 112.

Lindelow, John. "Team Management." In *School Leadership: Handbook for Survival,* edited by Stuart C. Smith and others. 130-49. Eugene, Oregon: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon. ED 209 736.

Lindelow, John, and Scott Bentley. "Team Management." In *School Leadership: Handbook for Excellence,* edited by Stuart C. Smith and Philip K. Piele. 2nd edition. Eugene, Oregon: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon. Forthcoming.

McNally, Harold J. "A Matter of Trust: The Administrative Team." *National Elementary Principal* 53, 1 (November/December 1973): 20-25. EJ 085 992.

Oregon Association of School Executives. "The Administrative Team." A Resolution by the 1987 OASE Resolution Committee. Salem, Oregon: OASE, 1987.

Schmuck, Richard A. "Development of Management Teamwork: National Overview." Paper presented at the Educational Managers Annual Academy, Wemme, Oregon, July 1974. ED 094 456.

Schmuck, Richard A., and Philip J. Runkel. "Improving Meetings." Chapter 4 of *The Handbook of Organizational Development in Schools*. Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing, 1985.

Wilhelm, Patricia M. "The Administrative Team, A Simple Concept to Facilitate Problem Solving." *NASSP Bulletin* 68, 468 (January 1984): 26-31. EJ 291 484.

Wood, Carolyn J. "Participatory Decision Making: Why Doesn't It Seem to Work?" *The Educational Forum* 49, 1 (Fall 1984): 55-64.

Interviews

George Benson, Superintendent, Centennial School District 28Jt, Portland, OR. Interview October 5, 1987.

Dennis Biggerstaff, Principal, Creswell Middle School, Creswell School District 40, Creswell, OR. Interview October 23,1987.

Clark Brody, Principal, Centennial Middle School, Centennial School District 28Jt, Portland, OR. Interview October 5, 1987.

Max Garrett, Principal, Cascade Middle School, Bethel School District 52, Eugene, OR. Interview October 23, 1987.

Marv Hempel, Director of Personnel, Centennial School District 28Jt, Portland, OR. Interview October 5, 1987.

Kent Hunsaker, Superintendent, Bethel School District 52, Eugene, OR. Interview October 19, 1987.

Dorothy Patrick, Director of Elementary Curriculum, Centennial School District 48Jt, Portland, OR. Interview October 5, 1987.

Minnie Richards, Principal, Centennial High School, Centennial School District 28Jt, Portland, OR. Telephone Interview September 29, 1987.

Richard Schmuck, Associate Dean, Division of Educational Policy and Management, University of Oregon, Eugene OR. Interview October 1, 1987.

Jim Winger, Principal, Fairfield Elementary School, Bethel School District 52, Eugene, OR. Interview October 5, 1987.